

MY CONSERVATORY CANARY

BY RUTH EVERETT

MY golden darling is a graduate of a German conservatory of music. Let me tell you what he can do and where and how he was taught. Perhaps you who read this make some pretensions in the singing line. If so, you may test your accomplishments as compared with those of my pet.

Hold your watch in your hand and try to sing one minute without taking a breath. You will find it difficult; but my pet will carry one tone for a full minute with perfect ease. He can sing part of a scale, and have every note true; and, what is more wonderful, when singing those scale notes he will change from the major to the minor key without any difficulty. We have a set of gilded silver bells in a closet. My pet imitates the tone of these bells exactly; with the far-away sound that their being in a closet gives them. He can sing the song of the nightingale and mimic the running waters of the babbling brook.

There is no royal road to learning, and my pet's accomplishments were acquired by diligent application on his own part and never-ending patience on that of his possessor in music.

PET was hatched and raised and taught in one of the peasant districts of Germany, where music, as an art, has reached perfection; where patience, as a virtue, discounts job many times over. One of the most interesting sections of Germany of which I have any knowledge is the peasant homes of these professional bird breeders and trainers. It is not a big business. There is little hope of ever becoming a billionaire at it; but the German peasant is a plodder. He is not an imaginative individual. He is industrious, and his desires are few, his necessities still fewer, and those who follow the business of breeding and training canary birds give it their entire time, and are satisfied with the life and the money they make.

Let us say that each one of these small breeders will raise from two hundred to three hundred male birds in a season. We cannot count the females, because they seldom sing.

I wish you could see the German peasant bird trainers. Hans wears a home-made hat covering that resembles a Turkish fez more than anything else of the hat or cap line. The professor has a round jacket; he has white, dinner-looking pantaloon, and wooden shoes which he removes just inside the door, walking about the house in his socks or bare feet, according to the degree of cold.

The musical education of the male birds begins when they are six weeks old. Hans puts each bird into a box about ten inches long, with one small, round hole in the center of the front. Birdy gets barely enough light to enable him to find his seed and drinking cups.

Long rows of these box cages are placed, one on top of another, four or five deep, in a sound-proof room; for Hans wishes his pupils to hear only such things as they may imitate. Their music lessons are given every two hours.

At first the birds hear just flute notes. Next comes a scale, which is played softly and very slowly. Hans listens carefully; for some of the birds are bound to be deficient in the gift of imitating. With such as these it is idle to waste time. The chop-note is the natural song of the canary; but a chop-note bird is permitted to remain with the opera singers, lest these last learn

songs they should not sing. So Mr. Chop-note is immediately taken out and sold as cheap trash, without any guaranty, for any price he will bring.

As soon as the birds have mastered the flute tones Hans takes his violin, and while walking slowly along plays and listens to his pupils, that he may detect mistakes and correct them. He plays on two strings at a time, from which he can draw full, harmonious chords. And now, mind you, those little golden-throats in their somber prisons will reproduce those chords! They actually sing two notes at a time!

During the time given to violin lessons the birds are not permitted to forget their flute notes. They get two or three turns at them each day. When his pupils have mastered the tones of the flute and violin Hans begins his instructions with the bells.

A series of the finest toned silver bells are placed in a box or closet and kept ringing, half an hour at a time, four or five times a day. The object of putting the bells in a box or closet is to give the birds' tones the effect of chimes at a distance, and the birds do produce these sounds most perfectly.

The trill is one of the most difficult things for the birds to master; yet in a few weeks Hans will have his birds trilling as no human voice can. Nor need these birds trill on one note. They change from one note to another, trilling all the while. My pet, in his trills, dwells on one note or more for such a length of time that I fairly hold my breath in amazed questioning as to how all that continuous music can come out of one little throat.

Hans uses both the violin and the flute to teach the trill. Trilling, flute notes, violin, and bells having been mastered does not gain for the birds a gilt cage and an admiring audience; for Hans insists upon their learning the babbling brook water song and also that of the nightingale.

Every bird that gets a diploma from Hans must sing at night. No matter how late you keep the lights burning or at what hour you switch on the electric, Pet is ever ready to burst forth into song.

IF I am blue, many things having gone wrong during the day, the songs of my yellow beauty seem to say, "Cheer up! You have health and me—many people have less!"

It was difficult to tame my pet; because, before I owned him, he had never been handled. When I first used to catch him he would peck at me, and his little heart fluttered dreadfully. After such a handling, when I would put him back in his cage, he would sometimes ball himself together on the floor and seem really sick all the rest of the day.

By slow degrees he came to understand that I meant him no harm, and now he needs but one invitation to hop to my finger and let me thus carry him whithersoever I will. In that position he will go through his entire repertoire. When he gets to the end he expects his pay; which titbit consists of four hemp seeds.

Be careful how you give your birds hemp seeds. The little fellows love them dearly; but they are very fattening. A female bird who gets too many hemp seeds will get so fat that she cannot lay her eggs. And be careful how you handle your birds. A canary bird is such a little thing that a hold which you would not consider too tight might kill it.

A "SINE QUA NONSENSE" CLUB

BY CHARLES L. PUTNAM

TO the modern observer there is exhibited in our streets as great and amusing variety of whimsical sign lore as ever greeted the eyes in long wanderings through London in search of out of the way names for literary use. The city of Washington is a fertile field for the unusual in signs. There are beyond one sign that rightfully should be called the "sign universal"; to wit, "A. D. Wilson, Real Estate." Every one of us has an interest in that. Again, we find "Daly & Knightly, Plumbers," which seems to be thinking of the daily and nightly lapses of the brotherhood ("O the wild days they made! All the world would laugh, though we remember in time that the charges of Brooklyn plumbers are five dollars per diem, as evidenced by a sign of the craft in that borough. "John V. Lem, Plumber." It is in Washington also that we find a tobacconist with the strange sign, "C. W. Plunge," over his door. Lit-

erary allusions find place in the partnership of "Parker & Bridget,"—surely Silas Weir's "Uncle Parker" and Charles Lamb's "Cousin Bridget." Yet, after all, perhaps the most astounding statement made by any Washington sign is the bald announcement that "W. H. Spelshouse."

PHILADELPHIA stands high in the list as a contributor to the gaiety of the seeker for novelty in signs. There we find the habitat of "Hosea Waterer, Seedsman," which brought forth from an irresponsible friend the atrocious comment, "Waterer-markable sign! Shall we find the Man with the Hosea?" And on the next square (for one must never say "block" in Philadelphia) is found a firm that certainly does sell good and low-priced articles; for does not its sign proclaim as much, "Dusel & Goodloe?" In the same neighborhood is a sign that shadows forth the greatest power of con-



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